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**FEATURE**

**The Impact of English as a Global Language  
on Filipino Language Practices**

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***Abstract.** A country's national language is a national treasure that should be preserved and passed on from generation to generation. In some multilingual contexts, as in the Philippines, the national language is evolving, being mixed with English (Francisco, 2012) possibly as a consequence of globalization. In an effort to create an awareness of this trend and foster the preservation of a country's national language, this research explores the impact of the emergence of English as a global language on the Filipino language. It further examines the perceptions of Filipinos towards the language modification as impacted by English. It operates under a qualitative critical research paradigm that utilizes semi-structured interviews, spot observations, and observations of Filipino media, especially those manned by the educated populace who are proficient in both Filipino and English. Findings indicate language modifications resulting in Taglish, some loss of proficiency in Filipino, and a lack of purity in the Filipino and English languages.*

**Keywords:** Code-switching, Filipino language, Globish, multilingual setting, mutual code, Tagalog, Taglish

**Introduction**

In this beautiful seven thousand-island country, it is never surprising to hear the locals speak Tagalog; however, my first impression when I initially came to the Philippines was that I was hearing an English conversation mixed with some other language. Though English words were articulated, comprehension was not possible due to the code-switching between Tagalog and English. I often felt frustrated when I landed at the shopping mall asking for some help in the shops. As soon as the locals spoke to me in the Filipino language with some English

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words, I immediately identified myself as a foreigner, hoping for a common communication. This revelation, however, did not make much difference as the locals barely switched their language codes entirely right away. They, once again, began speaking English with some Tagalog words. This phenomenon led to this study with the plan to try to understand how English, as an international language, influences and is influenced by local languages, especially in the Philippines.

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Language and Globalization**

Language is our means of communicating and learning. In the past few decades, English has taken up a very significant role by enabling effective communication among different races, and dialects. This phenomenon of “the coming together of the world’s cultures and economies is commonly known as globalization” (“English Language as a Global Force,” n.d., para. 2). Although the benefits of using English as dominant language in the global scale are considerable, there are also concerns raised against English as the dominant language. Some of them are the suppression, degradation, and even extinction of other languages.

**Linguistic dominance.** English and Chinese are two of the most powerful and widely spoken languages in the world today. It is, however, quite evident that English has been used as a dominant language on a global scale (“English Language as a Global Force,” n.d.; Wierzwicka, 2010). Due to globalization, societal expectations for English competency for receiving higher status and better recognition have driven non-English speaking people to strive harder in learning English (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). One of the reasons is that English is basically the language most employed for Internet use (Gupta, 1997); and with this favor alone, it creates an immense effect on globalization due to its capability for reaching out to the entire globe. As a result of the extensive use of English, the world has become smaller, and more negotiable, understandable, and profitable in spite of diversity in tongues, dialects, and cultural patterns. English, therefore, is considered as the world dominant language as it is extensively used as a means of effective communication for international business and diplomacy.

**English and Globish.** The increasing popularity of the use of English around the world has brought about the special term ‘Globish’. Globish comes from the combination of two separate terms which are ‘global’ and ‘English’. McCrum (as cited in Cortiner, 2010) suggests that the term “Globish” designates the role of English and its development. First, English is being used globally with

different localized versions that evolve together with the local dialects. Cortiner (2010) clarifies further that the term denotes the continuing evolution of a global trend of English usage and that English has become the world's language, impacting the depth and complexity of the role of English and bringing about the political and cultural revolutions in various societies. English has now gained more popularity and has taken up a more dominant place. It is being employed as the medium of instruction, communication, and diplomacy even in non-English speaking countries (Tsui & Tollefson, 2006). The linguistic development of English to "Globish" has evidently shown the impacts it has on the global scale.

**English language development in the Philippines.** Like many Asian countries, the English language arrived and was introduced to the Philippines during the colonial period. The American government imposed the English language in the country. English education and language development in the Philippines have been intertwined with the political, economic, educational, and cultural life of the country. Based on the historical developments, English was once enforced by Americans and consequently became the dominant language. After the American colonial administration put in place the public education system in 1901, according to Tupas and Lorente (2013), English was generally employed as the only medium of instruction in the Philippines for a number of years.

**Development of Filipino as the national language.** Prior to the administration of President Marcos, the country was a truly multilingual society and had employed English as the tool for communication among various dialects and local languages. Tagalog appeared in the limelight during this time. President Marcos made an effort to fulfill his dream of creating 'the New Society' and developing 'Pilipino or Filipino' as the national language. President Marcos, nevertheless, did not indicate Tagalog, the predominant language of people around the capital, as the national language. It was later employed for the purpose. He proposed a language which was more adaptive and accommodative to other local languages for the sense of ownership among citizens. President Marcos, therefore, stated that it would be "the national language acceptable to the entire populace ideally incorporating elements from various languages spoken throughout the islands" ("Tagalog Lang," 2009, para 1). As the national language was being developed, English and Filipino or Tagalog were designated as official languages (Tupas & Lorente, 2013). Obviously, the determination of President Marcos's administration in bringing about an adaptive national language did not help facilitate the development of Filipino as the national language. Consequently, English continues to thrive and serve as an effective tool in the nation, exerting its great influence on the Filipino language.

English was the only medium of instruction until a shift in language policy in 1974. According to Tupas and Lorente (2013), the Bilingual Education in the Philippines (BEP) was institutionalized in the country, for the purpose of better facilitating learning among Filipinos. The use of English was restricted only to Math and Science classes. The introduction of Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) came as a replacement for BEP in 2009, hoping to “facilitate learning among Filipinos and articulate their identity as a nation” (para. 2). The efforts for the national language resulted in the present language modification due to the exerting influence and the persistent raised status of English in the country (Francisco, 2012; Hult, 2012). In fact, English continues to have a great influence on Filipino language development and to be a counterpart to local languages in forming and directing the emerging language trend.

**English in multilingual societies.** The geography of the Philippines consists of 7,107 islands and there are over 170 distinct languages spoken among Filipinos (Lewis, as cited in Tupas & Lorente, 2013). In such condition, there is a great need of a common, shared language that can be used as an effective means of communication. English was, therefore, chosen for the purpose.

**The Existing Power of English in Outer Circle.** Western colonialism has left an impact on the Philippine language situation in a very similar way to other countries. The Philippines underwent English language policy change due to colonial administration (Hohenthal, 2003). English has played an important role since colonial times in such countries due to its quality of being a lingua franca. Despite government effort in promoting Tagalog as the national language for Filipinos during the martial law under President Ferdinand Marcos (“Tagalog Lang,” 2009) and the efforts in bringing BEP and MTBMLE programs (Tupas & Lorente, 2013), English is still playing a very important role serving as the official language in the country, and is very much a part of Philippine national language development.

**Cost of Monolingualism in Multilingual Societies.** According to Tupas and Lorente (2013), English became the first formal shared language as it was the first language to be introduced as the medium of instruction in the public school system set by American administration in 1901. Kachru (as cited in Hohenthal, 2003) points out that English is intimately associated with societal power and status in the society. It has the possibility of suppressing other languages and elevating itself. Just like the multilingual society in the Philippines, the single language practice is being generated and enforced in schools due to the encouragement of the exclusive use of English as the medium of school instruction by excluding the minority ethnic languages (Hult, 2012). Palatino

(2012) points out that, at present, there is a growing concern of native language acquisition problems among Filipinos raised by educators, scholars, and prominent individuals as they filed the petition to the Supreme Court of the Philippines for mandating English as medium of instruction in schools in 2003.

***The impacts of English as a linguistic dominance.*** Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas and Africa (1986) share an insightful thought on multilingual society that portrayed the same situation as the Philippines. They reason that the continuation of the practice of former colonial language brings a serious risk as “it is retained as medium of instruction” (p. 92). Though English is bridging the gaps between dialects, races, and cultures; it also restrains other native and local languages. The native languages spoken by the minorities can slowly become marginalized.

***Tagalog and Taglish.*** Code switching, the practice of moving back and forth between two languages or dialects, is commonly found in many non-English speaking countries like India, Singapore, and the Philippines. According to Bautista (2009), the practice of code switching happens when the speaker plays upon the connection of ‘the mutual code’ in order to create conversational effects and language unity. Similarly, another observation from Bassiouney (2006) asserts that code switching is the “means of creating solidarity” (p. 6). In the case of the Philippines, there is a practice of code switching between English and Tagalog called ‘Taglish.’ He also points out that the practice exasperates and causes frustration in visitors who think they understand as they hear English; but later, realize that they understand nothing.

According to Bautista (2009) and Francisco (2012), Taglish was associated with the speaker’s inability to use either Tagalog or English in a complete discourse. It is considered as a sign of lack of proficiency in one of the two languages, and as a result, there is a need for a replacement of mediated language vocabulary for common understanding in the continuous conversation.

***Declination tendency of native languages.*** Many schools around Asia have English as the medium of instruction or as one of the two languages being used academically in international and bilingual curriculums. Language policy in various countries has made it clear that English should be the second priority or even the first in international educational institutions (Hult, 2012; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). Josephson (2004) points out, “although English may not be fully transformed into a local language . . . it has an elevated position in comparison to other languages” (as cited in Hult, 2012, p. 241). Evidently, similar situations happen around Europe with the forceful language policy in favor of English as a global language. English has become localized and this clearly depicts the picture of the linguistic situation in the Philippines. There

is, no doubt, a possibility of declination of the native language practice in such a setting. According to Hult (2012), though the native or local languages are being used frequently as means of conversation, their popularity has lessened as an effective tool of communication either in written or spoken form or both.

English is obviously ingenious at incorporating words and phrases of other languages into its own. Many people are not even aware of this aspect; instead they termed this phenomenon as “Globish” (Cortiner, 2010). The case of the Philippines is unique as the native language is very much influenced by American English and Spanish. English is even considered an integral and substantial part of Philippine cultural heritage (Palantino, 2012) and some perceive English as “destiny’s greatest gift” (Francisco, 2012, p. 1) to the country. The evolution of English in the country also contributes to its popularity. With English being a language that is flexible and adaptive of other languages, it is observable that its fame has become a rival and a threat to native languages in the multilingual context due to its integrated transformation.

***Native language literature.*** There are concerns over linguistic globalization of English. Though there are efficiency gains in the field of science when the global dominant language is English; in the particular field of world literature, it is considered as “bad news” (*Center for Academic Policy Research*, n.d., para 1). According to Melitz (as cited in *Center Academic Policy Research*, n.d.) most great authors write in only one language and translation can never work well to resemble the beauty and overtone of native literature. Hence, English as global language might be a menace to the vintage and new creation of native literature.

***Cultural value and practice.*** According to John-Paul Nerriere, who coined the term Globish, language is a means of transport of culture to other cultural groups (as cited in Wierzwicka, 2010). Likewise, cultural change is expected as learning English also involves learning English cultures. One’s cultural identity is reflected through words, phrases, and norms of the particular group of people who own the language. Hult (2012) points out that English and other forms of cultures from English-speaking countries are widely accessible through media. Sapir (as cited in Hinkel, 2007) concludes that a language and the culture of its speakers must be analyzed jointly. On the contrary, Wierzwicka (2010) finds that this proposition is dubious as English is basically functional, neutral, and diversified in nature since it has a lot of borrowed words and phrases, making them sound very authentic in its own way. Lantolf (2007) emphasizes further that the organization of concepts and contextual meaning varies across cultures. Markedly, in most national and local contexts, English has assuredly established itself with a higher consideration in comparison to local languages.

**Research Questions**

Due to the current language practice among educated Filipinos, the national language or Filipino has been evolving as its use is “mixing up with English at every turn whether from laziness or lack of mastery” (Franciso, 2012, p. 1). This practice causes it to be less pure, leading to the situation where speakers cannot communicate effectively without mixing words in both English and Filipino to maintain the flow of normal conversation. Four research questions serve as the focus for exploration in this study to examine these issues:

1. What are language-learning experiences of educated Filipinos living in the multilingual context?
2. How has English affected Filipino language practices?
3. What are the factors that affect Filipinos’ existing language practice?
4. What are the perceptions of the educated Filipinos towards the emerging trend of language modification of the Philippine national language which has been imposed by English?

**Methodology**

In the Philippines, there are 12 main Filipino native languages that are spoken by about 90% of the population (Phrasebase, 2005). Filipino, as the national language, has not taken up a dominant place. English has become a part of Filipino language, resulting in Taglish (Bautista, 2009). This study focused on English as a global tool with a particular interest in the impact it has on Filipino language practices. It also explored the current situation and the emerging trend of language practice in a multilingual society to create a sense of awareness for cultural preservation, particularly of the Filipino language, among the Filipinos.

**Research Design**

The distinguishing language practice of Filipinos of the cultured populace was the phenomenon that this study focused attention on through qualitative research method. The nature of the inquiry was based on the critical approach as the study aimed at empowering persons to transcend limitations imposed on them based on race, class or gender, as this approach can offer alternatives to any existing limitations (Fay, as cited in Creswell, 2003). The leading questions which served as the focus of this study could be best answered through the qualitative approach as qualitative research provides a deeper understanding and more holistic picture of perceptions and their underlying beliefs, as well as facilitate an exploration of the sources of those perceptions and beliefs (Bernard

& Ryan, 2010). The focus of this study was not on the individual participants who used the language, but rather on the larger system of the cultured Filipino society, the influences of English on Filipino language, language development and modification that shaped the current language practice in the country.

### **Participants, Sampling Procedure, and Research Setting**

The participants chosen for this study were cultured Filipinos who could speak both English and Tagalog and were ranged in age from 15 to 60 years old. They shared the characteristics of having good educational background in both English and Filipino from Grade 10 and above. Being able to speak English intelligibly was also obligatory for participants in this research as English was used as the medium for data collection. Consequently, they were able to provide experiences and perceptions toward the exploration of the phenomenon.

The sampling procedure was purposeful sampling involving maximum variation sampling for the different age groups in order to find the emerging trend of language practice over a period. It was simply done through contact visits in order “to assess the appropriateness of a participant for the study” (Seidman, 1998, p. 41). The major suitability test for this study was the participant’s experience and background knowledge as well as belongingness to the various age groups. Participants were addressed in this particular study as “cultured Filipinos” which refers to the group of Filipinos who have a good educational background from Grade 10 and above and who have good exposure to English and Tagalog. If the determination could be made during the contact visit, the scheduling of date and time were done immediately with the participant’s preference.

The sampling size for in-depth, semi-structured interviews involved six participants from various age groups ranging from 15 to 60 years old. Two of the participants were in the 15-to-30 age group, two others in the 31-to-45 age group, and the last two in the 46-to-60 age group.

In order to get the truest picture of how Filipinos use Filipino, there were three spot observations. Spot observations were used to capture elements that make up a larger context (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, pp. 25- 27). Media plays a very significant role in connecting a large number of people and can significantly influence and reflect the perception and linguistic habits of the local people, the researcher, therefore, performed four media observations. They were done on a local movie, advertisement, game show, and some printed materials (magazines and newspapers).

The research was carried out in a multilingual setting, in a city not far from Manila (the capital city of the Philippines), where both English and Filipino languages were spoken by various age groups of cultured Filipinos. The spot



observations were done in various locations (offices in one private higher education campus, stores, Jolly Bee, and SM Mall) in order to find the truest picture of how the casual interactions among Filipinos took place. A recording device was used in this data collection process. I also conducted the interviews in more convenient and private locations according to the interviewees' preferences. Concerning the media observations, they were done in the library and at the researcher's residence as the technology (television and computer) were required. Language exchange on Facebook, conversations in local movies and regular Filipino TV programs were recorded. The printed materials in Filipino language at a school library, such as magazines and newspapers, were also analyzed based on how integrative both English and Filipino languages were instead of being used individually for communicative purposes.

### **Data Collection**

Prior to data collection, I employed the "identity memo technique" as the means of reflecting on and writing down different aspects of my own experience and the experiences gained from interviews and observations (Maxwell, 2005, p. 25), which were relevant to this study. With the aid of a recording device, the data collection was done through the triangulation of semi-structured interviews in English, spot observations (direct observation), and media observations, formulating the experiential data gathered through encountering experiences of researchers (Maxwell, 2005). Then they were analyzed using the critical subjectivity on what Reason (1988) refers to as "a quality or awareness in which we do not suppress our primary experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be swept away and overwhelmed by it; rather we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of our inquiry process" (as cited in Maxwell, n.d., p. 225).

The initial semi-structured questions were formulated and underwent peer review for validity. I also conducted “cognitive interviewing” (“Survey Science Group,” 2008, para 3) of two Filipinos to help determine whether the questions could generate the intended information. I carried out the in-depth, semi-structured, individual interviews by employing probing techniques to obtain more in-depth data (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, pp. 31-33). All interviews were conducted in English.

### **Data Organization, Analysis, and Interpretation**

After the interviews, I began the transcription, and coding took place right after the interview session. I utilized content analysis in finding categories and themes based on the data collected from the interviews. A flow chart was drawn to create links and concept among the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The dataset from spot observations and media observations were also incorporated into the flow chart. For the holistic picture of language practice, data was only drawn from the comprehensive data gathered by the spot observations and media observation. Finally, the data were interpreted to answer the research questions, and suggestions were proposed based on the results of experiences and perceptions shared by the participants and the related literature.

## **Results**

### **Language Learning Experience of Educated Filipinos**

Based on the findings from interviews, the language learning experiences of all participants in the in-depth, semi-structured interviews had been dualistic in nature. They admitted to not having learned English alongside Filipino from childhood, although few words were first introduced in English. Participant D said, “We learned what is nose, ear, and eye before learning them in Tagalog terms.” Participants D and E, who were in the age group of 15-30 agreed that some words were not even made known to them in Filipino, except in English, and only those who were self-motivated language learners and being placed in a facilitative environment where Filipino was spoken had advantage over those who only learned the national language in schools. In this effect, they were also not able to acquire some Filipino words that were considered deep and classical. Conversely, based on four out of the six interviews, the educated Filipinos indicated that older generations are more fluent and well informed with deep or complex Filipino language.

### **Effect of English on Filipino Language Practices**

Based on results from the spot observations, media observations, and in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews, it was evident that cultured Filipinos localized English to a large extent. Children are given names in English. English is also an official language and medium of instruction. From media observations, English language is used mostly in advertisements and alongside Filipino in printed media. From media observations in television programs, movies, printed materials, and Internet use, Filipinos blend English words, phrases, and sentences extensively even in simple conversations where there is no necessity to use ‘mutual code’ or requirement to know deep Filipino to communicate effectively.

Code-switching is performed widely among Filipinos. Though it was not found much in the spot observations, it was frequently found in the media observations through printed materials like newspaper, and magazines, and Internet messages on Facebook. From media observations through advertisement, movie, and printed materials; phrases like “Good morning”, “I love you”, “Five thousand pesos”, “I trust you”, “Go for it”, “handsome”, “Excellent”, “Very good” and many other simple words and phrases were code-switched from Filipino to English in a very natural way.

### **Factors Affecting Filipinos’ Existing Language Practices**

Most of the six suggested themes or contributors toward the existing Filipino language practice by participants were generally comparable. All participants of this study agreed that the factors that contributed to this phenomenon were the influence of colonialism and language policy in the past; the heavy influence of local media and globalization; self-perception and the positive attitude of people toward those who spoke Taglish as having come from higher social status, well-educated, well-traveled, and belonging to the modern generation; lack of mastery in both English and Tagalog; and the adaptive nature of the Filipino language.

Four out of six participants in the interviews cited poverty and better job opportunities in the “Call Center” as causal. It is also worth taking note that Participant F stated that the current Filipino language modification was the indicator of the government’s failure to create a very adaptive Filipino language without considering the possibility of losing its distinctive features as an individual language. He said, “Though the government has been trying hard to get people to speak [Filipino], it seems that they have not found the right answer because while they have increased the number of people talking in [Filipino], they have not produced people who speak well in straight English and straight [Filipino].”

### **Perceptions of Educated Filipinos Towards Emerging Filipino**

Based on the in-depth interviews, all participants were aware of the current linguistic practice and the emerging trend that Filipino was losing its uniqueness as an individual language. Four of the participants in the in-depth, semi-structured interview expressed their concerns by making comments such as “a very sad practice”, “unhealthy practice”, and “incorrect use of a language.” Participant B also said, “We should know and understand English but not really to internalize it as it will make us forget our national root language.”

All participants who had children at home (Participant A, B, C & F) admitted to not having done enough to support the national language development fully. Participant D, who was in the youngest age group, stated that she wished to have more exposure to Filipino at home. She shared her experience of learning Filipino more quickly in school where most people spoke only that language. Meanwhile Participant E from the same age group did not see any significant difference between speaking Filipino and Taglish as long as it brought unity among the people, helped in maintaining order, and facilitated well-being. The same participant also identified himself as “second-generation Tagalog” and recognized that one of the identifying traits for such group was that they understood Filipino words being spoken to them but were unable to respond back verbally in the same manner. When asked of their future prediction based on the current language practice, all of them agreed that Filipino language would be more affected in the near future though two of the participants predicted hesitantly that Filipino grammatical features might be retained.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study explored the impact of English as a global language on Filipino language practices. The results show that Filipino has been suppressed, degraded, and deprived by English, which was once a colonial language and is now a global force. Although not strongly corroborated by this study’s findings, it was found a few years ago that the Filipino language itself is very adaptive in nature, as much as English (Cortiner, 2010). Both languages continue to borrow and adopt words from other languages and make them their own. In this effect, they are continually evolving together as so-called “Taglish”. Filipinos are generally aware of the emerging trend and that there is a possibility of losing the uniqueness and gradually causing extinction of the Filipino language. They realize collectively that they could be agents of change in bringing back distinct Filipino as the national language (Franciso, 2012). Nonetheless, they also recognize it as a lengthy effort and the level of effectiveness would heavily rely on top-down implementation.

It is evident that the older generations are more concerned about national identity through the national language use as expressed in their opinions toward the current language practice. This alone implies that the younger generations of the Filipino-speaking educated populace has not been sufficiently instilled with the national spirit in maintaining and practicing the Filipino language as a cultural heritage. This results in lack of added values to what the government is trying to accomplish (“Tagalog Lang,” 2009). In addition to providing a rich environment for the language to develop, homes and schools should assist in creating and generating a positive attitude towards national identity through language practice.

Based on the current practice, the linguistic trend has slowly shifted from the time of colonialism when Filipinos were competent in both or either English or Tagalog to mastery in neither language. The identity given to Filipino language as Taglish reflects the accommodation Filipinos have given to English as a global language to be integrated into the employment of Filipino language either without taking notice of or ignoring the suppression that the current practice has on the national language. It is the common desire of Filipinos among the cultured populace that English and Filipino should exist in separate identities, being independent from each other. English should be taught and made known to the citizens but not improperly incorporating the language in the Filipino language practice.

Due to globalization, the media sources are definitely responsible as they are advocates for the development of Taglish and promoters of English as a global tool. They are regulating the minds and reinforcing linguistic habits of the local people on a regular basis in a way that suppresses and degrades the Filipino language by mixing languages and code-switching. As a result, Filipino language practice is heavily blended with English words and phrases and has become less unique and exclusive. In order to promote the frequent use of Filipino, the media can undoubtedly be used to facilitate and provide a role model of the local language purity to the people. This can begin by developing genuine sense of responsibility and fostering a positive attitude in considering it as intelligible Filipino, affirming its suitability and effectiveness for higher purposes (Francisco, 2012). By having an attitude of appreciation and delight in their national language Filipinos will ensure that it will definitely have its place and stand proudly as the country’s national language.

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